

**Heritage?
No thanks** 6

There's nothing like the word "heritage" to make a room fall asleep, and yet hundreds of thousands flock to Flanders' Erfgoeddag (Heritage Day) events like they're going to the circus. In God's name, why?



Nuts for Knuts 8

You've seen the in-your-face poster, now let us tell you if you should see the exhibition everyone's wagging their tongues over – *Ultramegalore*, curated by Flemish supermodel Hannelore Knuts



**Dining in
hill country** 10

Spring and early summer is the best time to visit Heuveland, a little slice of wonder on the border of France in West Flanders. We talk to Michelin-starred chef Kobe Desramaults, born and bred in "hill country"



The art of the flower



Don't miss Ghent's Floraliën, a record-breaking event that only appears every five years

LISA BRADSHAW

The Chinese used to use growing bamboo as a form of torture. Much more creative than that old, worn-out bamboo under the fingernails trick, they would strap prisoners over one of the fast-growing varieties, and – at a metre a day growth rate – it would literally pierce right through the victim. Some species of bamboo sprout so fast you can literally watch it grow.

To beautify, to heal, to provide oxygen, to give life or to take it away – such is the awesome power of the plant kingdom. You will never see more different species of it in one place than at the Gentse Floraliën. Although they won't be piercing any prisoners, they will have a display of the fast-growing bamboo. (Outside of the tropics, though, they only grow about half a metre a day.)

You'll also see floral art installations that are taller than you, a cloud of fuchsias above, ornamental flower carpets below, native birds from Australia, ancient cacti from Monaco and a giant dinosaur carved from shrubbery.

Taking up several halls of Flanders Expo, Ghent's Floraliën is the largest indoor floral exhibition in the world, and it only happens every five years. It has become the most

important event on the calendar for many horticulturalists worldwide. They come to network and make deals – and to show off flowers and plants they've been meticulously cultivating for months or even years. Because the Floraliën is also a competition, with cash prizes.

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Jobs market picks up

Flanders sees first upward swing since economic crisis began

ALAN HOPE

The jobs market in Flanders is climbing out of the slump, according to figures produced by the Flemish employment and training service VDAB, which showed 21.8% more job vacancies announced in March this year compared with the same period last year.

The figures represent the first upward swing since the global economic crisis started. In addition, the upturn is described by the VDAB as "very abrupt". Whereas in January and February there was still no sign of an increase in jobs, the total jumped in March by more than 25,000, to 37,903 new jobs.

The VDAB reacted with caution, however: "There is no reason for euphoria because we're comparing with figures from the middle of the crisis. This is just a signal that the economy is slowly recovering."

March is typically a month that sees an increase in job vacancies, and this year's long, cold winter meant that the catering industry postponed some of the recruitment they would normally carry out in February. This would help to explain the 64.7% increase in job announcements in the catering sector.

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Cycle projects get €100m boost

The Flemish government will invest €100 million over the next year in 200 new projects to improve the region's cycle path network, mobility minister Hilde Crevits announced. The 200 projects include grants to local authorities to lay cycle paths along municipal roads. Fietsersbond, the cycling safety representative for Flanders and Brussels, said it was "cautiously positive" about the announcement but pointed out that at a rate of €100m a year, it would take the government 30 years to complete the planned 12,000-kilometre network of cycle paths.

Crevits also announced that a new task force

called Fietsteam will be set up to map out a policy through 2014. The Fietsteam will be made up of representatives of the municipalities involved in particular projects and the five Flemish provinces, as well as public transport authority De Lijn.

Their job will be to work out which authority is responsible for the laying of paths, construction of tunnels and other work. This has been a grey area until now, which has slowed down the construction of the cycle network. "It doesn't matter to cyclists who carries out the work," Crevits said. "For them, all that matters is the result." ♦



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News in brief

More than 60% of **prisoners in Flanders** made use of the educational facilities on offer in the year from April 2008 to March 2009, according to education minister Pascal Smet. Of the 10,000 prisoners currently in custody, 6,063 were taking one of the study opportunities on offer, mainly in job-related subjects like carpentry and bricklaying, information technology and Dutch as a second language.

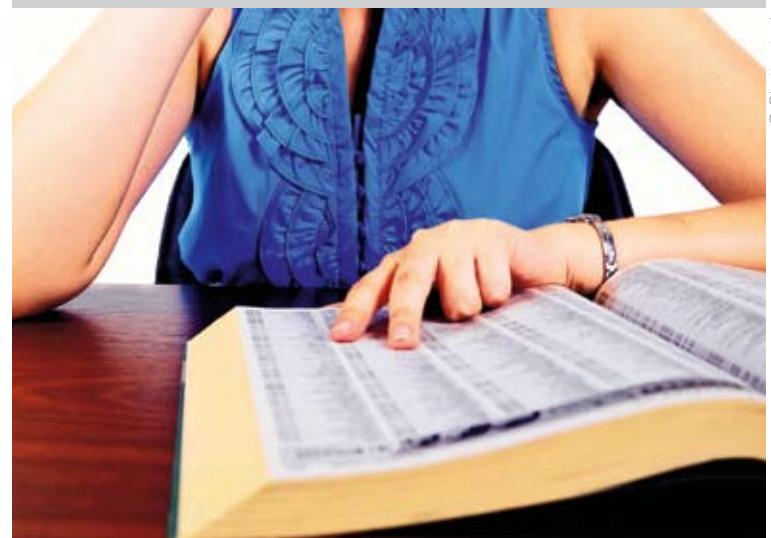
In the last year, 22 student houses in Leuven were declared **unfit for habitation** by the housing department of the city council. Student apartments at 100 different addresses in the city were the subject of 253 complaints to the council last year; the main problems were damp, mould and defective heating installations at risk of producing carbon monoxide, which can be deadly. Antwerp is to begin a pilot project involving the screening of student accommodation starting this month.

Last year the water companies operating in Flanders **cut off drinking water** supplies to 778 families for failure to pay, according to environment minister Joke Schauvliege. Kraainem and Linkebeek in Flemish Brabant were the most expensive municipalities for drinking water in 2009, at €3.63 per cubic metre. Baarle-Hertog in Antwerp province was the cheapest at €1.99.

The car-sharing scheme **Cambio** will expand its network of pick-up points with new sites at Brussels North Station and stations in Bruges, Leuven and Etterbeek. Following a cooperation agreement signed with the rail authority NMBS in December last year, the 11 cars currently sited at train stations have been used 750 times for a total mileage of 45,000 kilometres.

A new law due to be published this week will reduce the official period leading up to the **twice-yearly sales** during which no price reductions may be offered. The time period will be cut from six weeks to just over three. Belgium's sales are restricted by law to the months of July and January, and no price cuts are allowed in the run-up to the sales period. Many stores, however, offer special prices to regular customers in advance of the sales. The reduced embargo

White Pages on demand from next year



© Shutterstock

The official White Pages telephone book will from next year be available in a paper version only on request, federal minister Vincent Van Quickenborne announced last week.

At present the White Pages are delivered automatically unless a customer opts out, but most people now use other means to look up phone numbers, mainly online. However, only 51,000 of the 3.7 million who receive the White Pages decided to opt out, despite surveys carried out in Mol, Stabroek and Aartselaar which suggested that only 3% of people found the paper version useful.

But demand had been falling: in the year 2000 about five million books were printed, and now only 3.7 million. But that was a result of an improvement in distribution methods and a reduction in the number of landline subscribers. A change to printing techniques brought a reduction in the amount of paper used, from 13,000 tonnes in 2007 to 8,000 tonnes in 2009.

The telephone book is produced and distributed by Truovo, formerly known as Promedia, with the agreement that it also produces the Yellow Pages, which brings in advertising revenue. However, as in other sectors of the media, advertising revenue in the Yellow Pages is falling as people use it less and less.

Rather than full-page ads from large companies, Truovo's main source of income was the small box-ads placed in the Yellow Pages by local businesses – exactly those hardest hit by the economic crisis. The White Pages is produced in 19 regional editions and contains in all over six million numbers.

The switch from opt-out to opt-in, which Van Quickenborne announced on his Twitter feed, will, he said, save the equivalent of 38,000 trees and cut CO2 emissions by 1,512 tonnes – the same as the daily footprint of 476,280 families.

period only applies to stores selling clothing, shoes and leather goods.

former departmental offices in central Brussels are now lying empty.

The Flemish government has no record of the **real estate** in its possession to determine whether it is being fully used or lying empty, administrative affairs minister Geert Bourgeois admitted last week. The Flemish government has a portfolio of 1,564 properties, including 84 rented buildings, but the work of drawing up a full inventory on the use of each property will not be completed before the end of the year. Bourgeois was replying to a parliamentary question from former minister Marino Keulen, who had noticed his

Belgian trains will not be equipped with **internet access for passengers**, the national rail authority NMBS has announced. A spokesperson for the NMBS said a 2008 poll showed internet access was of minor importance for commuters, and most of those who required it already came equipped with the means to go online provided by their own ISPs. Last week, the first Dutch train with free internet rolled out of Amsterdam Bijlmer station. All German inter-city trains, as well as Thalys, are internet equipped.

Scooting off

The Post Office is abandoning motor scooters for mail deliveries in favour of electric bicycles and compact vans. Scooters account for 4,000 mail rounds a day



Jobs increase across all sectors, all regions

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But all sectors of the economy shared in the month's upturn, as did all parts of Flanders. Banks announced 1,000 new jobs, while the textile sector, with 338 new jobs in March, achieved a staggering 141% increase on the year before.

Last year was disastrous in Belgium, with about 70,000 job losses recorded, which makes this year's projected loss of 40,000 jobs looks positive. However, in the first three months of this year, 7,000 people lost their jobs. "The deepest point has not yet been reached," commented Chris Serroyen of the research department of the ACV Christian trade union. "Statistically speaking, the recession may be behind us, but there's no sign of that on the jobs market. It'll take more than a few green shoots here and there before we can say the crisis

is over."

At the end of March, Flanders had 205,816 job seekers out of work, representing 7% of the working population and 7.4% more than last year. The number of job seekers now unemployed between one and two years went up by 41%, while the number of those counted as highly educated rose by 16%. The latter tend to work in industries like high tech and insurance, which are more cautious in taking on new staff and which also have more recourse to temp agencies, who have also seen the number of jobs they handle increase.

- Last week Toyota vice-chairman Katsushi Watanabe gave foreign minister Steven Vanackere a pledge that the company would create 200 new jobs at its research and development plant in Zaventem, outside Brussels, where the company currently employs about 800 people.♦



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THE WEEK IN FIGURES



3%

of Belgians never brush their teeth, according to a nationwide health survey. One person in three has false teeth

41,558

school students in Flanders studying Latin or Greek this year, down from 44,514 in the academic year 2006-2007

21,774

thefts of car number plates in Belgium in 2008, a major decrease from 2000, when there were 38,220. Nearly 7,400 were in Flanders, where Antwerp is hardest hit

4,521

legal actions instigated by the Flemish government, according to calculations by member of Flemish parliament Carl De caluwé. Environment minister Joke Schauvliege's department has most, with 2,031

18

security guards to protect the "Omgekeerde Dendermonde", or Inverted Dendermonde – Belgium's most expensive postage stamp, with an estimated value of €75,000, on show last weekend at the Antwerpia philately event in Antwerp

2nd

foal born to the federal mounted police division was last week, named Surprise. The last birth in the division was in 1999

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Peripheral scuffles

To judge by some newspaper reports, the Brussels periphery is where the action is these days, as the Flemish government has announced that it is sticking by its decision not to appoint three mayors proposed by the municipalities of Linkebeek, Kraainem and Wezembeek-Oppem because they have repeatedly broken the country's language laws.

Olivier Maingain, president of the militant francophone party FDF, compared this decision with Nazi occupation practices, a remark that caused general indignation on both sides of the language divide.

At around the same time, it became known that some Flemish mayors in the same area had asked property developers not to sell residences to (mostly French-speaking) people from Brussels. Again, this led to a public outcry on both sides of the language divide.

All of this may easily lead to the wrong conclusions. One might conclude, for instance, that public opinion on both sides of the language divide is alike. It is not. One might also assume that the Brussels periphery is at the centre of Flemish politicians' attention. It is not. Or one might think that something important is going on here. Well, there is, but these incidents are merely shadows on the wall.

For, in the meantime, former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene is finishing talks on Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, the bilingual constituency that the Flemish want to split so that it corresponds to the constitutional design of Belgium.

In recent years, French-speaking parties have often presented the split as the beginning of the end of Belgium. Put like this, the issue inevitably arouses emotions. The debate became even more heated when prime minister Yves Leterme made the splitting of BHV an electoral promise in the 2007 federal elections. Since then, a lot has happened, but most people now agree that BHV should be split, if only to get rid of the darn issue. Dehaene, who is known both for his discretion and pragmatism, has been working away behind the scenes to find a solution.

As his deadline nears, no-one knows how close he is to a solution. Still, most people assume that an agreement will be found. If not, the Flemish have threatened to use their majority in parliament to vote on the split.

There is another argument to make all parties want to compromise, which is that everyone agrees that if Dehaene cannot do this, no-one can. And that really would send this country into a deep crisis. Much deeper, anyway, than any peripheral scuffle could do.

Ingrid Thoelen, whose body was dragged from the Albert Canal in Hasselt last week, was killed with two gunshots to the chest, an autopsy has revealed. The weapon used appears to be the same one that killed her partner, Saverino Strusi, whose headless and armless corpse was discovered in November last year in Stokrooie near Hasselt. He had also been shot in the chest.

The couple lived together in Vreren, a suburb of Tongeren, for two years until September 2007, when Thoelen, 39, decided to leave Strusi, 35, and go back to her husband and two teenage children in nearby

Alken. Shortly after, the former couple met to arrange the division of their household goods, and neither was seen again until Strusi's body surfaced two years later. The discovery of the Peugeot 806 containing Thoelen's body came after a decision by the Hasselt prosecutor to carry out a thorough search of the canal. The operation will resume later this month in the hope that a murder weapon or other evidence might be discovered.

Earlier in the week, divers also recovered from the Albert Canal the car and body of Adam Koch. The death of the 70-year-old from Diepenbeek is being treated as a suicide.♦

Antwerp Sportpaleis invests in green blue roof

The first phase of the major renovation project of Antwerp's Sportpaleis kicks off this week with the replacement of the venue's 10,000 square-metre roof with a new eco-friendly design. The Sportpaleis, which is the number two top-grossing concert venue in the world, opted for an energy-efficient roof covered with solar cell modules with an estimated production of 45,000 kWh per year. "In addition, the new roof is designed to absorb noise to reduce nuisance problems in the neighbourhood," explained Sportpaleis manager Jan Van Esbroeck. The blue-coloured roof, which will take about four months to complete at a cost of €2 million was locally designed and constructed by ABV+ Architects and Atab roof engineers. ♦ Marc Maes



© ABV+architects



© Belga

The new Belgian embassy in Tokyo was opened last week in the presence of prime minister Yves Leterme and foreign minister Steven Vanackere. The building was designed by Japanese architect Noriaki Okabe in cooperation with Belgian architect Jean-Michel Jaspers. Leterme said the project was the biggest investment in an overseas representation in the last 50 years. Vanackere, meanwhile, composed a haiku:

*Cherry trees in spring
Embassy in a garden
Blossoming friendships*



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putting people first

The art of the flower

The largest indoor floral exhibition in the world started out in a 42-square-metre pub

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But this is no dull affair of potted plants on tables. At the Floraliën, flowers and plants – more than 500,000 varieties – are part of a fantasy walking tour. Every region attending – from Italy to South Africa to China – must build a full garden. Belgium boasts regional azaleas, hydrangeas and begonias, while others put their traditional or best-looking petals of the year up for show. Horticulturalists with the most business to do – such as Australia, the US, China and Canada – don't want to miss it. You skip one Floraliën, and you've put a whole decade in-between visits.

Australia, in fact, shines at Floraliën. The country distinguished itself five years ago with the *Wollemia Nobilis*, a conifer tree thought extinct until a few were found southwest of Sydney. This year it is working with Parc Paira Daiso near Mons to import several species of native birds, who will reside in a giant birdhouse within the Australian garden. The path leads visitors straight through the bird sanctuary.

If an indoor garden puts you off somewhat off, consider that, at Floraliën, every flower is in bloom. That includes those that should be finished by now and those that aren't expected until August. Horticulturalists have spent a year conditioning the flowers to bloom right now, tricking them into thinking it's their turn. Put them outside, and many of those blossoms wouldn't make it through the week.

The art of the flower

Gardening itself might be an art, but Floraliën also hosts the "Black Box", an exhibition of floral designers, including Belgium's famous Daniel Ost and Gudrun Cottenier. A wholly different feel from the massive, colourful gardens, the large-scale designs are sometimes powerful, sometimes sensual. In the best works, they are both.

New this year to Floraliën is "Encadré" (Framed), a black box exhibition for young floral artists, who mount their installations within one-metre square frames. Also new, though not remotely a surprise in gastronomy-obsessed Flanders, are dining tables, set to perfection by some of the country's finest chefs and decorated by their equals in the floral arts. The florists intertwine their organic wares so completely with the restaurant's choice of decor that the table becomes almost like a vase or the soil where the plants naturally exist. Ten tables are set, including two by Belgium's only triple-Michelin-starred restaurants, the Karmeliet and the Hof van Cleve.



Music, which Poland supplies, naturally accompanies dinner. Poland is celebrating the 200th birthday this year of Frédéric Chopin and has delivered seven grand pianos, which are spread throughout the walking tour. Pianists will play work by the Polish composer and master of Romantic music.

Floraliën is working on the younger crowd more and more, to ensure a strong future in the country for horticulturalists and flower artists. This year – another first – they paired horticulturalists with groups of school kids to design their own gardens. There is a competition, and the winning gardens will find a place at Floraliën.

Plenty of demonstrations take place at the nine-day event, including tree trimming, landscape architecture and fertilising techniques. A market impedes your exit from Floraliën, with all kinds of plants and products for sales and advice to offer.

All of this public entertainment and education is completely separate from the wheeling and dealing side of Floraliën, where some growers begin their international trade careers. This separation of public and sales is another element that makes Floraliën unique in the world.

From the pub to the Expo

Giedo Thiry of Floraliën attributes the event's success to the fact that it has grown, pardon his expression, "organically". With a history older than the country itself, "Floraliën developed through the many people working in horticulture in Ghent. It wasn't something that had to be invented or created; it evolved. It has a very good foundation." In the mid 1770s, one Frans Van Cassel, a gardener from Ghent, began collecting exotic varieties of plants that he procured from English gardens. He soon had the largest collection in the area and became an expert at cultivation.

In 1808, he met with fellow gardeners to discuss procurement and cultivation techniques. Many gardeners worked for noblemen and together – skill combined with wealth – they formed the Royal Society for Agriculture and Botany and launched twice-yearly garden shows in Ghent. The first took place in 1809 in a pub of 48 square metres, with a bust of the emperor Napoleon presiding.

Needless to say, it grew. First to a few hundred plants, then to more than 1,000. Larger and larger spaces were sought, and in the 1830s the society built its very own building in the centre of Ghent and set the event for every five years. In 1839, the title Floraliën was bestowed. The organisation gained shareholders, of which King Leopold I was one. By 1908, Floraliën has outgrown its home once again, and the Floraliën Palace was built in Citadel Park (in time for Ghent's world's fair in 1913). In 1990, the now 43,000 square-metre event had to move to Flanders Expo – the building in Citadel Park is now the International Congress Centre.

The Royal Society for Agriculture and Botany still organises the Floraliën, and it is still made up of both noblemen and gardeners – precisely half and half. King Albert II officially opens every Floraliën. More than 350,000 visitors are expected this year.

Just one tip: don't turn your back on the bamboo. ♦

Gentse Floraliën 2010

17-25 April
Flanders Expo
Maaltekouter 1, Ghent

→ www.floralien.be



FLORALIËN IN FIGURES

4.5 hectares

of indoor garden, the largest in the world

22,000

cubic metres of soil used

5,000

trucks needed to haul in the soil. If you lined them up, they'd reach from Ghent to Zaventem

8

fountains

17

countries represented, including Kenya, Estonia and Thailand

700

staff needed to stage the event

Old mother cactus

For the 2005 Floraliën, Australia brought a *Wollemia Nobilis*, a rare conifer tree species three hundred million years old. This year, Monaco brings old, rare plants: a priceless cactus collection from its Jardin Exotique. The oldest-known cacti in the world, some are more than 100 years old. "And they are huge," says Giedo Thiry of Floraliën. "They are not often allowed to leave Monaco and, in fact, this will be the last time. They are so old and rare that they don't want to risk transporting them anymore." One of the cacti, known locally as the "mother-in-law's chair" is famously in the shape of a sofa. Each cactus had to be removed from its hillside home by crane for the trip to Flanders.



Getting there

It's easy to reach Flanders Expo by both car and public transport. Heading east or west on the E40, take the Flanders Expo exit. From Gent-Sint-Pieters train station, take tram 1 direction Flanders Expo. The NMBS has a Day Trip special that includes train, tram and entrance to the Floraliën.

Heritage Day: A cynic's guide

Oh no, it's Heritage Day again! Just what is the point of looking at a load of crumbling buildings and faded mediaeval paintings?

DENZIL WALTON

“Another Heritage Day? There was one last year!”

That's because it's an annual event in Flanders and Brussels, held on the first Sunday after the Easter holiday. This year it takes place on 25 April.

“Is it the same as Open Monument Day?”

Not exactly. Open Monument Day concentrates on architecture and our immovable heritage. Heritage Day is much broader, covering movable objects such as furniture, paintings, clothes, books, even food and drink, as well as our intangible heritage, like folklore, traditional skills and even dialects.

“So what's the point of Heritage Day?”

It's one of the most important heritage events in Flanders and Brussels because it puts cultural heritage in the spotlight and encourages us all to interact with it in a contemporary, qualitative and meaningful way. The objective is that each one of us discovers cultural heritage as something valuable and relevant. In addition, Heritage Day stimulates reflection on topics such as heritage education, improving accessibility to the public and sustainability.

“Who's behind it?”

It's an initiative of FARO, the Flemish interface centre for cultural heritage, but it's made possible by hundreds of museums, churches, libraries, societies dedicated to folk culture, clubs, youth organisations, universities and schools. Every year this results in a fantastic, rich and diverse selection of activities.

“Personally, I don't see the point of examining the past”

Our historic heritage helps connect us to our roots. It tells us about past society, how our ancestors lived and interacted with each other and gives us a long-term view of social and environmental change through the ages. This helps us understand the present and plan for the future.

“Doesn't it cost a lot of money to preserve all this heritage?”

Considerable physical, natural and intellectual resources have been invested in our historic heritage. It's wise to make the most of these resources, rather than destroying them or allowing them to decay and incur extra cultural, environmental, social and economic costs.

“Wouldn't the money be better spent on creating jobs?”

Our heritage contributes significantly to economic prosperity. It generates value by attracting investment. The economic benefits of tourism are also closely linked to the historic environment. For example, the heritage sites of Flanders attract vast numbers of tourists from all over the world, who make an important contribution to the Flemish economy, often through direct employment. Heritage projects can also generate employment and play an important role in maintaining traditional skills that can then be put to use in the marketplace.

“To be honest, I'm more interested in preserving the natural environment”

Investigating our heritage can contribute significantly to our understanding of environmental change and the impact that our activities have had on natural resources. Such knowledge can help individuals and governments take better decisions on how to manage the natural environment in the future. In addition, historic sites such as castles frequently provide locally important habitats for flora and fauna.

“What's the theme this year?”

It's Heritage Day: FAKE?, which provokes us to consider what is authentic and what is not. How do we detect a forgery? Is a perfect imitation of a painting also a worthy piece of art? When is fake marble permissible? What about *trompe l'oeil* murals? Or the digital manipulation of images? Heritage Day: FAKE? will attempt to address these and many more issues in practical ways.

“Such as...?”

In the Antwerp Diamond Museum you can bring your own diamonds along to see if they are genuine or fake. In Tongeren you can learn how to distinguish a genuine antique from a replica, while in the Ghent Design Museum you can discover how forgeries are big business in the fashion world. In Bruges you can find out how mediaeval the city actually is and which famous legends are not quite what they seem. Over 600 separate events are planned, and over 200,000 visitors are expected to attend.

“200,000! I don't want to spend the whole day in traffic!”

Take advantage of De Lijn's special bus ticket. For €2.50 you can travel anywhere by bus or tram on Heritage Day, directly to over 400 locations. Reduced ticket prices are also possible on the Brussels metro and the Belgian railways.

“My kids won't want to walk around stuffy buildings”

Then you should select one of the many child-friendly activities. These include treasure hunts, games, cooking sessions, medieval arts and crafts, drama and jugglers.

“Hmm, well...how much does it cost?”

All of the 600+ activities of Heritage Day are free. ♦

Heritage Day: FAKE?

25 April, 10.00-18.00
Across Flanders and Brussels

→ www.erfgoeddag.be



You call it eccentric, we call it heritage: Carnaval preparations in Herenthout, Antwerp province

MASTER FAKER ?

The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels presents its research on two paintings by master art forger-restorer Jef Van der Veken: "Just Judges", the famous stolen panel from the brothers Van Eyck's "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" (copy pictured), and the Mary Magdalene from the Renders collection, after Rogier Van der Weyden.

A visit to the painting restoration workshop, the scientific imagery service (with infrared and X-ray apparatus) and the paint analysis laboratory offers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of art forgery and its unmasking. This intriguing story of hyper-restoration, false *craquelures* and hidden inscriptions reveals the darkest, most hidden facets of one of the masters of imitation of Flemish Primitives.



MAP YOUR ROUTE

This year Heritage Day is working closely with Flemish company RouteYou, which specialises in creating route networks for maps and GPS navigation systems for tourists, hikers and cyclists. RouteYou has created some 20 cycling and walking routes throughout Flanders that take in various Heritage Day sites and activities. You can print the route or download it to your GPS.

→ www.RouteYou.com/erfgoeddag

Americans pulling out of Belgium

US investment fell by more than €4 billion last year

ALAN HOPE

American companies are pulling out of Belgium at an alarming rate, according to figures compiled by the National Bank and published last week in *De Morgen* newspaper. Last year, US investment in Belgium fell by more than €4 billion, reversing a trend of growing investment in recent years: in 2007, investment rose by €4.39 billion; in 2008 by nearly €4 billion.

The haemorrhage is being felt across the board, both in Belgian companies that are partly owned by American investors and in the Belgium-based subsidiaries of American companies.

The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Brussels immediately called for caution in interpreting the National Bank's figures. There was, a spokesman said, a visible fall from 2007 to 2008, and then to the first half of 2009. But "American statistics show a turnaround," according to AmCham's CEO, Marcel Claes.

A statement on the chamber's website claims: "These figures confirm the findings of AmCham Belgium in its

most recent US Direct Investment in Belgium Report (USDI) published in November 2009. The study foresaw a further decline in USDI in Belgium together with a decrease in the number of jobs at US affiliates based here.

"On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the figures used by the National Bank of Belgium are not only preliminary, they also do not take into account the earnings US corporations have reinvested in their Belgian subsidiaries. In 2006, 2007 and in 2008, reinvested earnings consistently made up about 75% of US capital inflows in Belgium."

According to preliminary figures from the US Department of the Treasury, AmCham points out, USDI turned around in the third and fourth quarters, with positive figures of €1.34 billion and €970 million – a much-reduced deficit for the year of €1.72 billion, but a deficit all the same.

The global economic crisis is not the problem here, experts said. That should have caused a falling-off in inward in-



Janssen Pharmaceutica, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, announced the loss of nearly 600 jobs in November last year

vestment across the board, but in fact Belgium has been losing ground to the Netherlands and Germany since as far back as 2003.

Belgium's competitive position is at the root of the problem, according to AmCham. In its 2009 report, the organisation pointed to taxation and social charges on business and a certain inflexibility in the labour market as the main brakes on USDI.

In addition, Belgian governments have taken a "rather passive" approach to

attracting investment, according to Claes, with the result that existing USDI tends to be in traditional sectors – like General Motors investing in Opel Antwerp. "Germany and the Netherlands have been more proactive," Claes said. "They're fortunate in being more active in new technologies. I'm not saying nothing has been going on, it's just that the Netherlands and Germany took more drastic measures and did it earlier," he said.♦

Scrap limits on student work, universities demand

The federal government should scrap plans to introduce a 50-day limit on students taking jobs, according to a joint campaign launched last week by the employment services of Flanders' universities and colleges. At present, students are restricted to working 23 days in the summer holidays and 23 days at other times of the year in order to qualify for special status on social security payments. They may work more, but then employers have to pay normal social security rates.

Federal employment minister Joëlle Milquet has introduced a proposal to change the limits to 50 days in all, spread across the whole year. The proposal is being discussed in the National Labour Council, made up of unions and employers.

The universities worry that the proposal may cause unfair competition among students. If a student has worked during the school term and used up some of his or her 50 days, they might be less

attractive to a potential employer when approaching the threshold at which normal social security rates apply. Ironically, those most likely to use up their allowance in term-time are those most likely to need holiday work.

The educational services propose a system allowing students to work in weekends during term and only in July and August, with no maximum limit of days. That system would be simpler and fairer, they said.

- Large companies reserve holiday jobs for the sons and daughters of their own staff, according to a survey carried out by the Sud Presse newspaper group. At BNP Paribas Fortis, for example, 560 holiday jobs are available, but last year only 36 "outsiders" were taken on. Dexia reserved 150 jobs for children of staff, and rail authority NMBS reserved 750 jobs, at a pay rate of €1,697 net a month.♦



© Shutterstock

Family business: Companies reserve holiday jobs for employees' children

Unizo to strengthen social safety net

Unizo, the organisation for the self-employed in Flanders, will train staff at municipal social aid agencies (OCMWs) to help them deal with the victims of bankruptcies.

As a result of record numbers of businesses going bust in the economic crisis, more and more families of the self-employed are making requests to a special

commission for the suspension of normal social insurance payments, which leads to a referral for assistance from the OCMW.

However, according to Unizo's own aid service for self-employed businesspeople, Tussenstap, OCMWs often give the self-employed bad advice. Tussenstap has now offered to step in and help train OCMW staff

in the particular problems of the self-employed. Tussenstap wrote to 308 Flemish OCMWs – one for every municipality in the region – and received 65 replies accepting the training offer.

The courses will consist of "social security for the self-employed in difficulty"; "avoiding a business collapse" and "coping with failure".♦

About 24,000 business people are estimated to be experiencing difficulties in the current economic crisis – five times as many as actually undergo bankruptcy, according to research by Brussels University College.♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Volvo

The Volvo-Ghent assembling facility is heading for a bumper year, according to Derek Jessiman, the plant's CEO. Success of the newly launched S-60 model and high hopes for the development of a full electric C30 model are expected to help the unit's production figure to pass the 200,000 mark this year.

Batteries • Umicore

Umicore, the Brussels-based non-ferrous metals and advanced materials group, is investing €60 million in its plants in Japan and Korea to increase production capacity of lithium ion batteries. The company will also build a testing facility in Japan for batteries used in electricity-powered vehicles.

Energy • Thenergo

Green energy group Thenergo has sold Leysen, its waste-management affiliate, to the Dutch Van Gansewinkel company.

Metals • Nyrstar

Non-ferrous metals group Nyrstar has increased to 31% its stake in the Australia-based Ironbark Zinc Limited, operator of Citronen zinc and lead mine deposits in northern Greenland.

Leather • Vuitton

French luxury leather goods brand Vuitton plans to launch a range of its best-selling Neverfull handbags branded with the name of the Flemish seaside resort Knokke. The move follows other Neverfull brands such as Saint-Tropez, Saint-Barth and Palm Beach.

Supermarkets • Delhaize

Supermarket group Delhaize is to open its first discount Red Market outlet in Flanders early in 2011. The store will open in Opwijk, Flemish Brabant, about 15 kilometres northwest of Brussels. The move will mirror a test store opened last year in Gembloux, Wallonia.

Synthetics • Desso

Dendermonde-based Desso will supply the synthetic turf for two of the stadiums used in this summer's football World Cup in South Africa. Natural grass will be laid over the synthetic turf sub-structure for additional resistance to extensive use.

Wholesale • Trade Mart

The 200,000-square-metre Brussels International Trade Mart, 50% owned by the Texas-based Crow Holding company, is to undergo a €30 million renovation over the next four years.

ULTRAMEGA
LOREFASHION
ICON
TESTI
MONY

All about Hannelore

**Flemish supermodel
curates her own show in Hasselt**

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Months before the opening of the latest exhibition in Modemuseum Hasselt, it's all anyone in fashion circles could talk about: Hannelore Knuts, the Flemish top model who has posed for every great fashion photographer and graced the covers of dozens of international magazines, is curating a show about herself. Then the posters of a stark naked Hannelore hit the streets, and the general public took note, too, jaws dropping. Many were in awe (because Hannelore tends to inspire that). But others were more critical, wondering how a model would take on the difficult task of curating a quality exhibition. Would it be all about herself? Would it have anything to say? Kennet Ramaekers, coordinator of the fashion museum in Hasselt, the city of Hannelore's birth, acknowledges this scepticism: "The idea of having a model curate an exposition has raised eyebrows. Aren't models supposed to be empty boxes?" he said at the press opening. "But I figured that someone who's had a career like Hannelore's must have an enormous background. Hannelore is like a sponge; she has absorbed so many influences from talented people. And she has a very critical mind."

Hannelore was given carte blanche to create a universe reflecting her own experiences at the centre of the intersection of art, fashion and culture. She called it *Ultramegalore* (read: Ultra-mega-lore), an intriguing start at least, with its connotations of a collective folkloric imagination applied to supermodel glamour.

The scenography is the result of a close collaboration between the model and Dimitri Jeurissen of Base Design, a Belgian-based, world renowned design studio. "Hannelore is very playful and dynamic," Jeurissen says. "She has so much energy... she really turned our offices upside down."

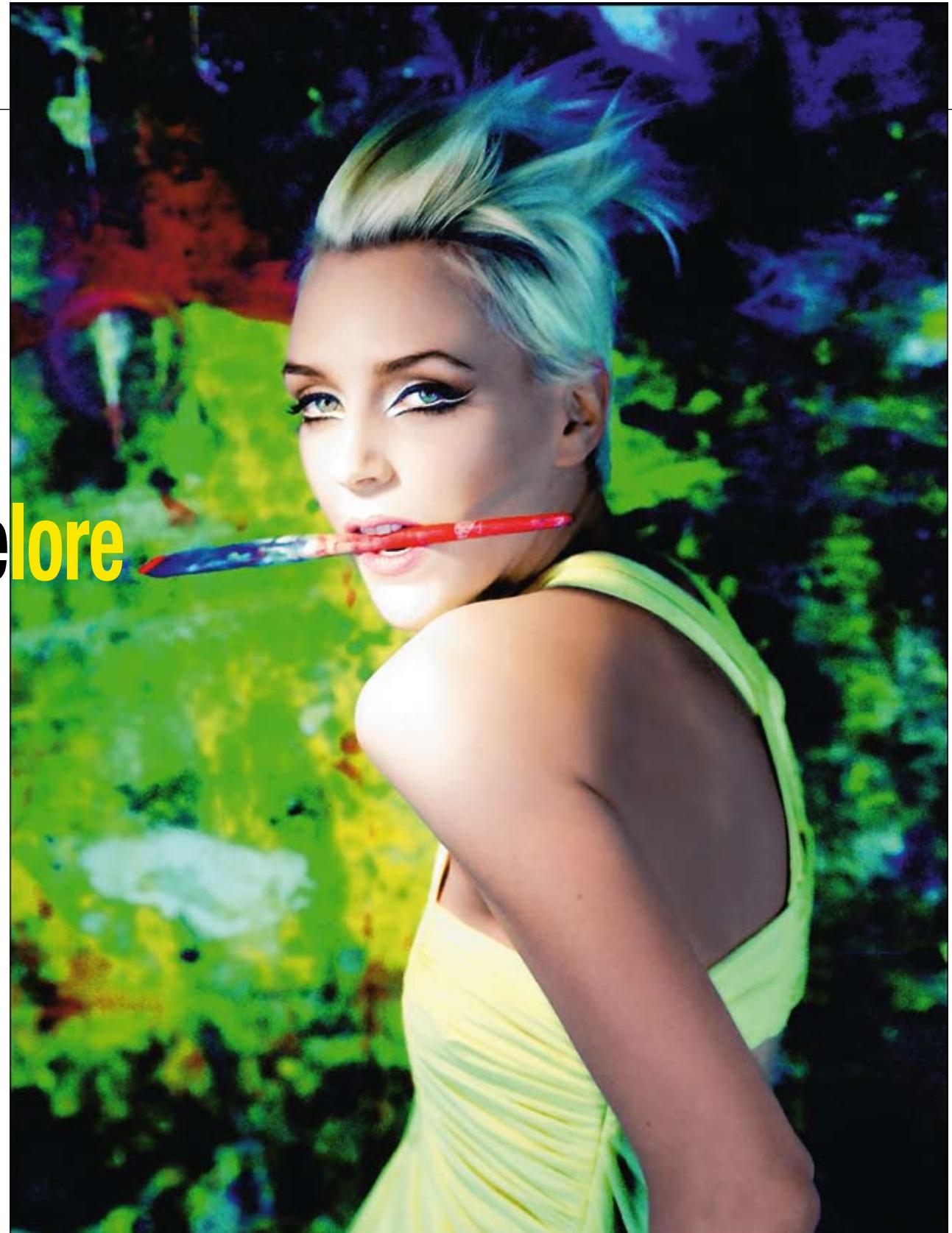
She is smiling all the time, as if she wants to say: "I know, isn't it amazing?"

At the press conference preceding the official tour of the exhibition, led by Hannelore herself, each speaker takes turns praising the collaboration with the top model, who has always honoured her Hasselt roots. "Here is a lady of world class, who gave our city the opportunity to show that we're more than just the capital of a province," says councillor of culture Karolien Mondelaers.

Ramaekers adds: "So many people who knew about the exhibition have asked me: 'Is Hannelore in Belgium then?' But she has been here every day for the past year, working on even the smallest details."

"To the frustration of many!" Hannelore interrupts. All the while she has been sitting there, listening to the others with a big smile on her face. Sometimes she winks to someone in the audience or makes a funny face at one of the photographers, who gratefully clicks away. There's no denying her professional abilities.

Finally it's time for the tour to start. With impossibly high plat-



Ultramegalore offers an overview of contemporary fashion photography by some of the world's best, like Iranian-born Ali Mahdavi, who took this shot of Hannelore Knuts

form heels and white alligator jacket, she walks in front of the group, holds up her bottle of water up high and says: "Follow the guide!"

At the entrance, the 32-year-old points to the high walls adorned with hundreds of pictures of her at photo shoots. "It shows what it's like to be a model. You have to be a chameleon," she says. Above the photos, coloured police lights form a star, an installation by Belgian artist Kendell Geers. Hannelore recounts how she met him through Belgian-based designer Haider Ackermann and how she loves the piece even more for its name: "The Devil You Know".

Then she points to a large-scale photograph of a magazine in which she modelled, a work by Belgian artist Philippe Metten. She says that he broadened her artistic horizons: "He took away my fear of art."

It is a prelude to the rest of the tour: artists and photographers are scattered around seemingly at random, but to Hannelore, their work and its position in the show is all significant. She invited each participant personally, and each object has its own story. "We've definitely played with boundaries," says Jeurissen when we move to the next room. "We're making a link between fashion and art, through Hannelore."

If only that were true. But in fact, it's difficult to shake the feeling that we're intruders in an insider's story. Having Hannelore as a personal guide can be fun, such as when she strides by a few masterpieces from the Jean-Paul Gaultier archives, mentioning that the Gaultier residence is her home-away-from-home in Paris. "They're always up for a nice coffee or a good shot of vodka," she smiles.

But what isn't happening is a connection with the story and the work for those who won't have Hannelore as a personal guide. Illustrating the link between fashion and art is a worthy goal – but here, a wasted opportunity. *Ultramegalore* is more of a biopic, indeed missing what critics supposed it would:

insight that speaks to visitors about the power of fashion to influence culture and the way in which fashion and art influence each other.

And, while it's clear that many of the exhibition's installations mark the influence these people have had on Hannelore, it is not very often the other way around. It's remarkable how Hannelore enjoys leading the tour, without any sign of false modesty. She is smiling all the time, as if she wants to say: "I know, isn't it amazing?" It's a welcome change from the blasé attitude you come to expect in the fashion world, and yet I can't help thinking: What is it exactly that she is so proud of? Then Hannelore walks by a neon sign that says "twisted taco"; with a mischievous look, she explains it is a synonym for vagina. I can't help but smile. I don't want to fall victim to "fashion cynicism" myself: in the end, fashion is all about how it looks. And one thing's for sure: Hannelore's show does look amazing.

Best to take *Ultramegalore* in with a simple gaze of wonder and appreciate the funny little details Hannelore has added, exuding an optimism and joy of life. It's not a coincidence the tour ends with a video of lingerie-clad dancers singing: "If I knew you were coming, I'd have baked a cake". ♦



Ultramegalore

Until 6 June
Modemuseum Hasselt
11 Gasthuisstraat
Hasselt

→ www.modemuseumhasselt.be



Anarchists Indeed

With every album a break from the past, DAAU practically make a tradition out of being different

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Almost 15 years after their remarkable debut, Die Anarchistiche Abendunterhaltung seems to go back to basics with its new album *The Shepherd's Dream*. Thanks to the tongue-twisting name – taken from the 1927 Herman Hesse novel *Steppenwolf* – DAAU is commonly called de Anarchisten (The Anarchists) in Flanders. In the mid 1990s, the young Antwerp foursome, average age 19, created a sensation opening for rock bands and covering the dEUS hit "Suds & Soda". Nothing unusual? Think again, since their line-up was violin, cello, accordion and clarinet.

All four members were classically trained, and their work bore evident traces of chamber music, but also of Michael Nyman's minimalism, Astor Piazzolla's tangos and klezmer. They played the music with the fearlessness of a rock group, and they always operated in the rock circuit. But the music kept changing. They added electronics, drums, bass, piano – very sporadically even vocals – but not all at the same time, nor continually. Every new album had elements of the previous one, but also seemed a reaction against it. This ever-changing music might not always have been easy for the fans, but it was the result of the restlessness that characterises true artists.

"It's not that we're easily bored," explains accordion player Roel Van Camp. "It's the band's democracy working at full speed. We have different tastes and, before making a new album, there's a lot of talking and discussing."

DAAU released *The Shepherd's Dream* last weekend, their sixth effort, not counting a remix album and a rarities compilation. On the new release they play, for the first time since their 1996 eponymous debut album, purely acoustic music. Have they come full circle?

Van Camp says no. "It's not a back to basics album for us. Yes, it's acoustic again, but the music is different. The tempo used to be much higher, and it was also all about power and virtuosity. The compositions now have more space to breath."

And, of course, there is one other major difference. DAAU was formed in 1992 by Van Camp (*second from right in photo*), clarinettist Han Stubbe and the brothers Buni and Simon Lenski, who play, respectively, violin and cello. Even in later years, when a few other members joined – and left again after a while – the four have always been seen as the core of the band.

And then Buni up and left after the previous album *Domes-*



tic Wildlife. "It wasn't an option to look for a new violinist," Van Camp stresses. "Buni is irreplaceable."

But the ideal solution was close at hand: Hannes d'Hoine, the double bass player who had been playing with the band live for four years already. "This implies a slight musical shift," explains Van Camp. "The cello now has a more melodic role."

The Shepherd's Dream doesn't come in a jewelled case, nor in handsome cardboard packaging so en vogue these past few years. No, it comes in a wooden box! And a beautiful one too, with the band name and the titles engraved. Inside, there's a little artwork for each of the five tracks, the CD and an empty sleeve for a second CD, *The Dream Live*. This is the idea: minutes after the end of each DAAU gig, you can buy a CD with the recording of the concert. For €9, you have a unique souvenir to slip into that empty sleeve. It seems like a bit of a strategy to counteract illegal downloading. But Van Camp again denies: "The point is that you can buy [older] CDs for €6 already, but new ones are still conspicuously expensive. If you're gonna let people pay €19, you better give them their money's worth."

DAAU sold live albums two years ago on a tour in Sweden, "and it worked," says Van Camp. "More or less 10% of the

people buy a live album."

With a band famous for changing with every album, the obvious question is what the future will bring. Van Camp only has one certainty in store: "It will sound different again." ♦

DAAU live

16 April

Once Upon A Festival
Laarne Castle
Eekhoekstraat 7, Laarne

17 April, 20.00

Botanique
Koningstraat 236, Brussels

24 April

Kraakpand 4.7
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29, Ghent

→ www.daau.com

Africa Film Festival · Leuven's annual event highlights features from Congo

IAN MUNDELL

With the 50th anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Congo's independence from Belgium fast approaching, it's logical that Leuven's Africa Film Festival should mark the event. But its decision to revive Raoul Peck's 1999 drama *Lumumba* has proved controversial in some quarters. The film's depiction of Belgian involvement in the murder of the country's first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, is not how some people want to commemorate the period.

But it's an excellent movie, and the festival has much more to say about the Congo at that. There's *Mobutu, roi du Zaïre*, Thierry Michel's fine documentary on the 30-year Mobutu dictatorship, and *Cemetery State* by Leuven anthropologist Filip De Boeck, which brings us right up-to-date with a portrait of a vast, overgrown Kinshasa graveyard.

Supposedly closed years ago by the city authorities, Kitambo cemetery is still used for burials and plays host to an informal economy that sees gravestones turned into market stalls. De Boeck befriended a group of freelance grave diggers, and it is through their daily routine that the film explores the sites. It also describes how burial rites in the city are changing with diminishing respect for the dead. It is not unusual for funerals to be taken over by groups of angry young men who insist on parading the coffin through the streets.

Elsewhere in the festival, the Congolese point of view can

be seen in a programme of short films from Kinshasa, and a lifetime achievement award will be presented to director Mweze Ngangura. This is followed by a screening of his 1998 film *Pièces d'identités*, about a Congolese royal arriving in Brussels to look for his daughter, sent here to study medicine.

Other festival highlights from sub-Saharan Africa include opening film *Shirley Adams* by Oliver Hermanus, about a woman struggling to get on in contemporary Cape Town after her 20-something son is left paralysed after a shooting. There's also *From A Whisper* by Wanuri Kahiu, about the 1998 terrorist attacks on the US embassy in Nairobi, and *Terra Sonambula* by Teresa Prata, about Mozambique's long civil war. For a lighter evening out, choose *Nha Fala* by Flora Gomes, a 2002 film about a woman launching a singing career in Paris against the advice of her superstitious mother back in Guinea-Bissau.

The Leuven festival is also about North Africa, which has a different cinema tradition, ranging from Egyptian melodramas to Moroccan social issues. There's a particularly strong selection this year dealing with life in Casablanca, from a gritty tale of street kids in *Ali Zaouna*, to *noir*-ish crime in *Casanegra* and crossed destinies in *Heaven's Doors*.

On top of these films new to Belgium there are revivals of recent releases, such as the sharp child soldier drama



Johnny Mad Dog. Sneak previews include Claire Denis' excellent *White Material* and Belgian films *Vent de sable*, *femmes de roc* and *Le Jour où Dieu est parti en voyage* (pictured). ♦

Selections from the Africa Film Festival's programme also screen in Brussels, Ghent and other cities across Flanders

16 April - 1 May

Across Leuven

→ www.afrikafilmfestival.be

Looking for soul food and a place to eat

One of the youngest chefs to ever earn a Michelin star, Kobe Desramaults finds home at the very edge of Flanders

SABINE CLAPPERT

If ever there were two words that seem mutually exclusive, they are surely "Flanders" and "spacious". With a population density of 439 people per square kilometre – much higher than Wallonia or any of its European neighbour countries – you might have given up trying to find truly wide, open spaces.

But that's the thinking of a city dweller, and no such place proves this quite as much as Heuvelland. Literally translated, it's "hill country", and it doesn't lie. In the south-western corner of West Flanders, it's rife with breathtaking panoramic views, fragrant wooded slopes and lingering sunsets.

Still, you may have never heard of Heuvelland, and that's thanks to the West Flemish, who are notoriously modest. No flashy TV commercials entice you to visit, no slick print adverts in the country's glossy lifestyle and travel magazines. But if there is only one thing you must know about the West Flemish, it is this: they always under promise and over deliver. Always.

And so it is with one of the region's most famous locals, Kobe Desramaults. He is the chef and owner of the restaurant In De Wulf, which, in 2005 – when Desramaults was just 25 years old – was awarded a Michelin star, making him the youngest chef in the country with the accolade.

Born and raised in Dranouter, one of the eight villages that make up Heuvelland, the young chef's passion for the region dominates every aspect of his life: his desire to return after working in such culinary utopias such as Sergio Herman's Oud Sluis in the Netherlands or Barcelona's renowned Comerc 24; the philosophy behind his cooking; the seemingly endless knowledge he continues to amass about the region, its people, its culinary heritage; the wild herbs he still picks from fields and forests himself.

Nothing escapes Desramaults' inquisitiveness about what the area has to offer or his drive to incorporate local influences and ingredients into his famous dishes. "I want to introduce people to the region through my cooking," explains Desramaults. "Why should I serve sushi in West Flanders when we have some of the most delicious locally bred beef called Rood Rund [Red Beef], which is extremely rare? And why should I fly in vegetables from half a world away when there is superb local vegetables that people have all but forgotten about?"

It seems wise beyond his years – turning his back on the hipster fusion methods of contemporary cooking in favour of local blessings. But a childhood spent gallivanting across the hills of Heuvelland has clearly left an indelible impression. "I remember racing across the dirt roads between farmers' fields on my BMX with my friends, the smell of elderberries bombarding my nostrils with the promise of summer....We were never home; we were always off cavorting somewhere," he grins. "What child wouldn't wish for a childhood like mine?"

His passion for the region still sees him spending a lot of time outdoors, from his daily run with his two German Shepherds,

to the vegetable patches he maintains to grow hard-to-find vegetables or the walks that take him to little-known areas where he goes to find elderberries or obscure herbs like wild *zuring* (docks and sorrels).

When talking to Desramaults' peers or reading reviews, the same words always return: pure, earthy, understated complexity. There is a deceptively effortless purity about Desramaults' cooking that forms a perfect mirror to the wholesome, earthy character of the region.

"There's a little area called Eeuwenhout where I go to pick wild herbs," says Desramaults. "To get there, you have to walk through a tunnel of trees, which makes it feel as if you are entering a fairy forest. Going there just before dusk on a warm summer night to get the herbs is pure magic."

Most of the products at In De Wulf come from suppliers in the region. "Farmer Rick", as Desramaults calls him, (Rick Delhaye) from West-Outer specialises in organic farming and provides all their beef and dairy. A farmer just across the border in northern France supplies the pork. "I know where to find all the wild herbs I need, and the boys and I pick elderberries in June," he says, referring to his kitchen staff. "And another farmer up the road provides us with home-made buttermilk." Being able to start with fresh, home-grown produce "is an enormous privilege," he continues. "There is an authenticity to the region and to the people that inspires me to keep on innovating."

There's also a "think globally, act locally" scent about the young chef's methods. "I'm under no illusion that I can change the world," he says, "but I can contribute in my own small way by supporting people who care about the way they grow vegetables or produce meat and in turn showing my customers what can be done with simple – often unknown – local ingredients. I hope to make a difference in the way we think about good food and in how we consume."

This approach has an appeal that stretches far beyond Belgium's borders: he currently has trainee chefs from California learning the trade under his watchful eye.

Even when he isn't in his kitchen, Desramaults' love for the region keeps him close. On his days off, you can find him chatting with locals over a beer at De Barbier in Dranouter, relishing home-made bread and *potjesvlees* – a local multiple meat delicacy that goes back to the 14th century – or checking out the concerts at De Blauwe Plek in Reningelst.

So dust off your bicycles and smell the promise of spring in the air, like Kobe Desramaults has always done, and keep these thoughts in mind: local, fresh, pure. It's not that difficult, really: just up the road, beyond those hills waits a place called Heuvelland. You may not have heard of it, but trust me, you should have. ♦

→ www.heuvelland.be



Chef Kobe: "Why would I serve sushi in West Flanders?"



Inside In De Wulf

Kobe Desramaults' restaurant is in Dranouter, a village of 700 people that hugs the border between Flanders and France. In De Wulf, which mimics Desramaults' food with its earthy, understated elegance, is located in his parents' original farmhouse. In fact, his mother runs the eight hotel rooms above the restaurant.

For lunch or dinner, choose between the spacious dining room, with its relaxed, rustic atmosphere of light wood, or the stone terrace, ideal for lingering sundowners.

The menu at In De Wulf changes monthly, in accordance with the availability of local ingredients, and this month, you'll find signatory dishes such as "Pigeon from Steenvoorde" (ripened and cooked in hay), pork belly with chickweed and shoots of sorrel or quail's egg with hop and jus of chervil, together with the crustaceans and shellfish that Desramaults so often gives a prominent position on his menu.

Not just content with offering unprocessed food directly from the land, he serves it the same way, using large stones or pieces of wood as bowls and plates.

→ www.indewulf.be



Kobe Desramaults gathers his own herbs and berries in the abundant Heuvelland, the south-west region of West Flanders



I craft, therefore I am

How a hobby is turning into an industry in Flanders

COURTNEY DAVIS

Today's art of crafting no longer conjures up images of childhood projects with Popsicle sticks, glue and poor eye-hand coordination, nor is it limited to retirement home knitting circles. Today's standard of crafting far exceeds even Martha Stewart's growing empire of domesticity as evidenced by Etsy.com, an online emporium of the do-it-yourself crafting world and a microcosm of crafting today.

With categories ranging from jewellery to furniture and materials as diverse as tulle and tin, it's easy to lose yourself in the virtual world of all things creative. Instead of old ladies cross-stitching proverbs, imagine young entrepreneurs hawking embroidered wallets, hand-printed stationery and steampunk sculpture. With more than 400,000 crafters selling their wares from 150 countries (including 71 in Belgium), this isn't the arts and crafts you remember – this is both an industry and a way of life.

The Arts and Crafts Movement started in the late 19th century as a rebellion against factory culture. The current popularity of crafting can be seen as a backlash against the more virtual world of education, where we can "think" but perhaps not "do". It is also partially attributed to cultural values, with people wanting quality products that last longer and have more personal meaning than a mass-produced piece of plastic from Taiwan.

Crafting is also synonymous with do-it-yourself (DIY), an ethic, particularly strong in Flanders, that focuses on being self-reliant, performing tasks that might normally be hired out to experts. One need only look at the public popularity of both Batibouw, Belgium's largest building fair, and the Floraliën (on the cover this week) to see that the Flemish like to look, learn and then reproduce methods and designs themselves. By putting knowledge in the hands of everyone, these kinds of events encourage ordinary people to do more than they thought possible.

DIY encompasses the general idea of making, fixing and creating, but it has also defined a subculture. This subculture began in the 1970s with punk rock: Musicians took the DIY ethic of avoiding the professionals by recording their own music, making their own merchandise and booking their own tours. This in turn inspired DIY magazines, book publishing and comic strips.

Today, the DIY and crafting community is a combination of that anti-establishment passion and the information needed to create something – tinged with humour. Craftster.org, an online community, has this slogan: "No tea cosies without irony". Compared to Etsy, they're more about learning and less about sales, but no less popular, with a million visits a month. This site can help one make anything, from dandelion wine to crib rail guards.

DIY in Flanders

"People used to laugh at me and my strange fascination with all things domestic," says Astrid-Fia De Craecker, 30, a self-professed craft addict from Ghent. "I like it partly because it's not really done. I love all crafts. I'm always creating and making things: pies, photo album covers, clothes....I need a project to work on." De Craecker, a single mom, make-up artist and stylist juggles many roles and still finds time to craft at least three hours a day, creating high-quality children's clothes for her own brand, Little Miss Y.

Selling them, though, proved to be a problem. It is extremely difficult to make a living from crafting because handmade items take time. The price of items is, therefore, higher than many people want to spend.

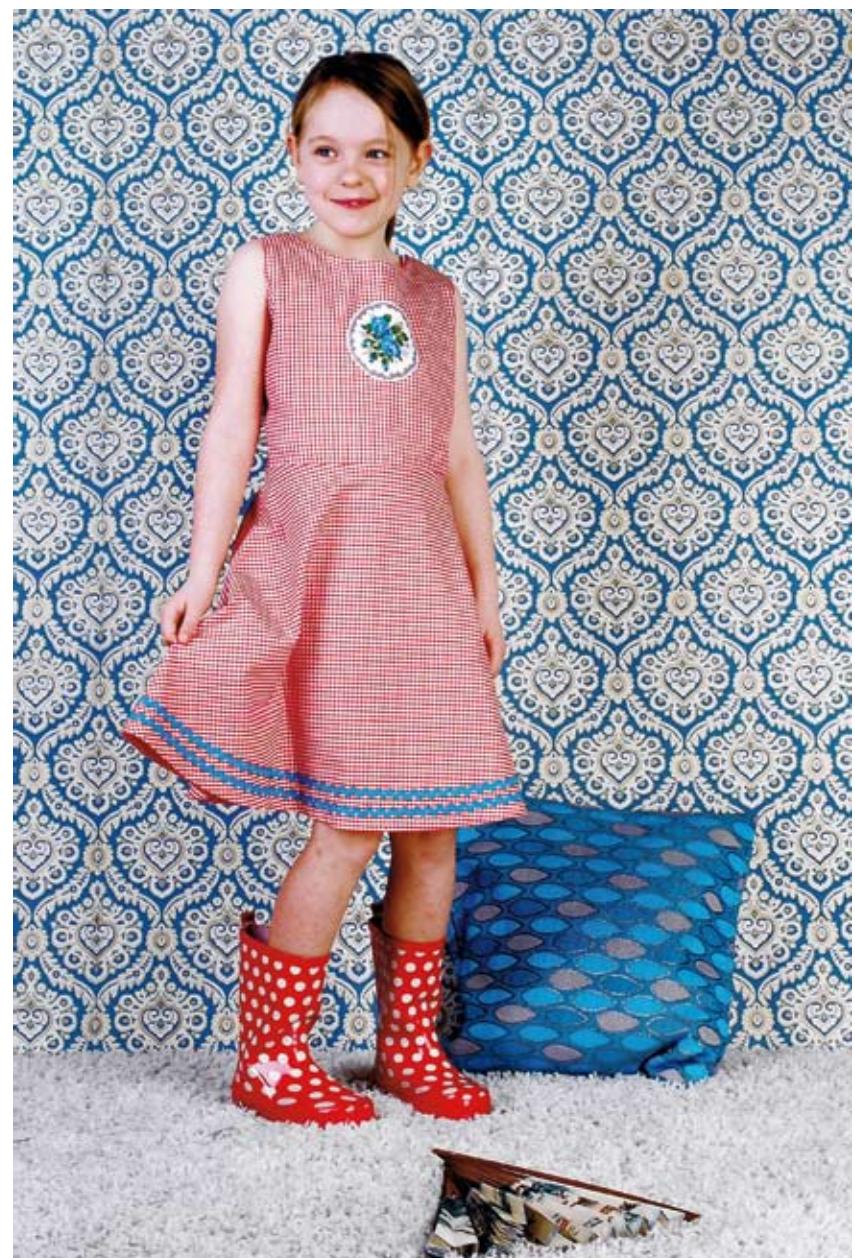
And this is where the contradiction comes in. "It stops being a love and turns into a chore," De Craecker explains. "But as soon as you send your designs to a manufacturer, it loses that heart-felt, homemade quality. I hate feeling like a machine, but I also don't want to have it made by machines. I'm torn."

De Craecker sought a solution, which turned out to be strength in numbers. Four Ghent-area crafters and artists joined forces to open a shop dedicated to homemade goodies geared towards

children. Spoonful of Sugar, in Ghent's shopping district, sells the designers' own items and some others, such as the easy-to-love underground Flemish brand "I love deer", which features hand-printed T-shirts with antlers.

Antwerp, official fashion capital of Belgium, of course has a lot to add to the craft scene. Tuchila Kamps incorporates old fabrics into her playful kids' and women's clothing line. Like De Craecker, she had to work out a solution for selling her home-made wares. While online craft sales are common outside of Flanders, Belgians are still hesitant to buy products online. To supplement her online store, she holds a sale in her Antwerp home every two months.

Similarly, a small group of Antwerp crafters banded together to create Handfabriek, which pools resources to rent out a space for a few annual sales featuring the group's clothing



and accessories. Markt van Morgen, meanwhile, is a monthly outdoor market that expands beyond clothing, into jewellery, furniture and whatever else can be made by hand. From May to September, it's staged every second Sunday in Antwerp's Kloosterstraat, where antiques and bric-a-brac shops line the road. ♦

Tuchila Kamps' next sale is on 18 April from 11.00 to 17.00

→ www.tuchila.com

The next Markt van Morgen is on 9 May from 12.00 to 18.00

→ www.marktvanmorgen.be

→ www.spoonfulofsugar.be

→ www.handfabriek.be



Solar solidarity

LISA BRADSHAW

The annual spring opening of the Royal Greenhouses features a special exhibition

Some of the flowers on view this year at the annual opening of the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken might not be exactly organic, but they're certainly powered with ecology in mind. Belgian artist Alexandre Dang's "Dancing Solar Forget-Me-Not" exhibition is made up of hundreds of the little purple flowers, handmade and moving through the power of the sun.

Dang's series of solar-powered dancing flowers – each one containing a solar cell that converts light into electricity and powers a tiny engine – are a quirky, colourful hit, with exhibitions across Europe and the US. Looking every bit like a field of flowers, he has done bright yellow sunflowers and "Dancing for Europe" in multi-colours (with little smiling faces), recently seen in the window of the AXA building in Brussels' Kunstlaan.

The new forget-me-not installation has been created in collaboration with the Brussels-based Child Focus, the European organisation for missing and exploited children. The forget-me-not is an international symbol of solidarity and hope.

The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken are open to the public for three weeks every year, the only time you can see the awe-inspiring Art Nouveau series of glass houses, home to hundreds of species of flowers and exotic plants. Designed by architect Alphonse Balat in 1873, they were built for King Leopold II on the property of the Royal Palace in the Brussels' suburb of Laeken. Constructed entirely of steel and glass, remarkable for the period, they are home to staircases, sculpture, fountains and an art studio. ♦

→ www.monarchie.be

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Agenda

Cabaret Spring

It's the season for cabaret in the Capitole Gent, featuring a number of Flemish performers, like author Freek De Jonge, folk group De Nieuwe Snaar and actress An Nelissen with "Obscene Fables" → www.capitolegent.be



FLANDERS TODAY
APRIL 14, 2010



Shoe, shoe,... SHOES!

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

To outsiders, it may seem slightly weird how enthralled Flanders is with shoes, as one exhibition after another puts footwear in the spotlight. But this fascination is not so hard to understand if you take into account Flanders' history with shoes.

In the early 20th century, the western part of Flanders especially had an international reputation in the shoe trade. Regrettably, most small factories and craftsmen had to give up the fight against competition from Italy and Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 60s. But the various shows and museums celebrating the craftsmanship of shoes are a way to keep their spirit alive.

The Schoiesel Museum (Footwear Museum) in Izegem, West Flanders, was the first museum in the country dedicated entirely to shoes. It is also the museum that pays the most attention to the craft of shoe making, detailing and illustrating the process behind the finished product. And it famously has a broad scope – show-

casing examples that date back as far as the 1920s, but paying attention to more recent design, too.

Their latest exhibition zooms in on the 20th century as the period during which women's shoes evolved most quickly and drastically. Clothing changed from floor-length dresses and skirts to elegant lengths around the ankle, just below the knee and – much later – to way above the knee. As a result, shoes grew more and more important.

Moreover, as women's roles in society changed, so did their needs: no woman wears the same shoes caring for her children, going to a party and going to work. Different styles were introduced for different occasions, and heel heights went up and down accordingly. (The very high heel above was made by the Eperon d'Or factory for the Brussels International Exposition of 1935).

For this show, called *Shoe, shoe,... SHOES!*, the museum in Izegem underwent a serious update. A modern take on the history of shoes

deserves a modern environment, after all. And thanks to this willingness to draw the link between history and the present – instead of being stuck in the past – the museum always has an interesting selection of recent and current shoe designs on display.

Belgian and Dutch designers prove that even with the disappearing of the shoe industry from their countries, it is still possible to create innovative and beautiful shoes here: just look at the examples by Dries Van Noten, Tim Van Steenbergen, Els Proost, Ellen Verbeek and Nathalie Verlinden, for example.

Until 18 December
Schoiesel Museum
Wijngaardstraat 9
Izegem
→ www.musea.izegem.be

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

International Photo Festival → Knokke



Gustave van de Woestyne → Fine Arts Museum, Ghent

Claus and Ostend: An Homage → Ensor House, Ostend



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
APR 16 22.00 Aardbeefman

Lotto Arena
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
APR 15 20.00 Grace Jones

Petrol
Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
APR 15 20.00 My Little Cheap Dictaphone + Yacht

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
APR 16 20.30 Rihanna
APR 20&21 14.30 Houden van presents Griffelrock 2010, featuring Paul Severs, Eddy Wally, Lisa del Bo and more

't Kwartier
Keistraat 11; 0475.28.66.10
www.tkwartier.be
APR 15 20.00 Hotel Imun + Vitalski & special guest

Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
APR 15 20.00 Het Verdikt + Wahwahsda + Molten with Chasm the Rift **APR 16** 19.30 Larry Graham & Graham Central Station + Mongoose. 20.00 Meuris + Boyshouting **APR 20** 20.00 The Black Box Revelation + General Fiasco **APR 21** 20.00 The Vortex + The Mojo Filters

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
APR 15 20.00 Funeral Dress + The Kids + Belgian Associality **APR 16** 20.00 Merdan Taplak Orkest + Balkan Beat Box **APR 21** 20.00 Don McLean

Belle Vue Café
Henegouwenkaai 43; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
APR 17 20.00 Ignatz + Bohren & Der Club of Gore

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be
APR 14 22.00 Adrian Volant Trio **APR 15** 21.00 Intergalactic Gang Bang Party

Halles de Schaarbeek
Koninklijke Sint-Mariastraat 22; 0900.26.060 www.halles.be
APR 17 20.00 Les Cowboys Fringants

Le Bar du Matin
Alsembergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59
<http://bardumatins.blogspot.com>
APR 15 21.00 MDM Band

Le Botanique
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 14 Julien Pras + Eiffel **APR 16** Sivert Höyem, Villagers + Wild Beasts. Robin McKelle **APR 17** DAAU **APR 18** The Unthanks **APR 20** Yacht. Chapel Club **APR 21** Tunng, Claudine Munro & The Luna Boots

Magasin 4
Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
APR 14 19.00 Furious + Subhumans **APR 16** 20.00 Black Sheep + The Rebel Assholes + Burning Heads **APR 17** 20.00 Le Kraken + Celeste + Revok

Viage
Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43
www.viage.be
APR 24 20.30 Vaya Con Dios. 21.30 Iris Jenkins

DON'T MISS

The Habit of Art

22 April, 19.30

Kinepolis cinemas

Rave reviews are coming out of London for this National Theatre production, which is the final in the Theater in the Cinema series at Kinepolis venues across Belgium. Productions in the series are broadcast live via satellite from the National Theatre, and this new play by Alan Bennett about the poet WH Auden, full of comic asides, sexual suggestions and sly gossip, is a must see.



→ www.kinepolis.be

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaalaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestrnational.be
APR 15 20.00 M
APR 21 20.00 Rodrigo y Gabriela

Ghent
Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
APR 15 22.00 The Mutants

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
APR 15 19.30 Admiral Freebee
APR 16 20.00 Drums are for Parades
APR 18 20.00 Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve & Kobe Proesmans

Hasselt
Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
APR 16 20.00 And So I Watch You From Afar + Kapitan Korsakov

Kortrijk
De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 16 Deerhoof exclusive rooftop concert **APR 17** The Go! Team + So Cow + Chad Popple & Gorge Trio + Father Murphy + Paolo Pandolfo + more **APR 18** 21.00 Deerhoof + The Kids + Talk Normal + Ben Butler & Mousepad + Daan Vandewalle + more **APR 19** Shrinebuilder + Kingdom

Leuven
Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
APR 15 20.00 Nona Mez with Milow and Tom Helsen, among others
APR 16 20.30 Hempmade Fashion Show with Rootstock + Undefined + Vibronics + Lokomotiv **APR 17** 18.30 Kirlian Camera + Sonar + de Volanges
APR 19 20.00 Femi Kuti **APR 20** 20.00 Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve & Kobe Proesmans

Agenda

FLANDERS TODAY
APRIL 14, 2010



Alsemberg

CC De Meent
Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00
www.demeent.be
APR 15 20.15 Jacques Pirotton Quartet

Antwerp

Buster
Kaastrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
APR 14 21.00 Playtime Session **APR 15** 21.00 Buster Jurassic Jam **APR 17** 22.00 Stilton Spoon **APR 21** 21.30 Sam Stuyck Trio

't Kwartier
Keistraat 11; 0475.28.66.10
www.tkwartier.be
APR 18 18.00 Sunday Jazz District : La Femme Belge

Brussels

Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
www.archiduc.net
APR 17 17.00 Renée **APR 18** 17.00 Trio Elf

Atelier 210
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
APR 19 21.00 Toine Thys Hammond Trio

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 14 The Wrong Project **APR 16** Fred Lani & Superslinger **APR 17** Fred Delplancq Quartet **APR 21** aNoo

Sazz'n Jazz
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
APR 15 20.30 Stéphane Salkin Trio **APR 18** 20.30 Clare Louise + Dietrich

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
APR 14 Chamaquindo, salsa **APR 15** Julien Tassin Quartet **APR 16** Multitude **APR 17** 21.00 Brussels Rhyth'm Blues: The Witness + Gene Drayton Unit **APR 19** Master Session **APR 20** Jeff Gardner Trio **APR 21** Los Soneros del Barrio

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:
APR 14 JazzBXL Music School **APR 15** Johnny and the MG's **APR 16** New Orleans Z'Hulus **APR 17** Jan de Haas' All Stars Quintet **APR 21** Nicola Di Tommaso Quartet

Viage

Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43
www.viage.be
APR 16 21.30 Nelson Trio

Ghent

El Negocio
Brabantdam 121; 0479.567395,
www.mi-negocio.net
Until APR 16 22.00 The El Negocio Dajo De Cauter Sessions



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 14 20.30 Liu Fang, Chinese pipa lute
APR 16 20.30 Aurelio Martinez
APR 17 20.30 Manou Gallo + Dobet Gnahoré

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
APR 16 20.00 Kristi Stassinopoulou & Stathis Kalyviotis, Greekadelia folk

Le Bar du Matin

Alsembergsesteenweg 172;
02.537.71.59
http://bardumatin.blogspot.com
APR 19 20.00 Karoline de la Serna

Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 37-39;
02.217.26.00
www.maison-du-peuple.be
APR 16 20.00 Queimada: Spontus, Marinette Bonnert & Michel Jacqmain, Marielle Van Camp, A Contrabanda

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
www.wolubilis.be
APR 17 16.00 Les Vaches Azteques (cabaret for children)



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
APR 17-18 Brahms Happening with conductor Philippe Herreweghe, deFilharmonie and students from the Antwerp conservatory
APR 21 20.00 Champ d'Action: Michael Nyman, Gavin Bryars

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
APR 14 20.00 Plamena Mangova, piano: Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms
APR 17-18 20.00 Danel Quartet with Daniel Blumenthal, piano; Paul De Clerck, viola: Brahms' full quartets and quintets

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
APR 15 12.30 Filip Suys and Ara Simonyan, violins; Jan Van Duffel, horn; Mihoko Kusama, viola; Harm Van Rheezen, cello: Joseph Martin Mengal, Guillaume Lekeu, Mozart
APR 16 20.00 Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Sakari Oramo, with Lisa Batiashvili, violin: Ligeti, Prokofiev, more

APR 18 11.00 Stéphanie Proot and Christia Hudziy, piano; Trio Cappa
APR 21 20.00 Freiburger Barockorchester conducted by Gottfried von der Goltz, with Kristian Bezuidenhout, fortepiano: Beethoven, Mendelssohn

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
www.demunt.be
APR 19 20.00 Genia Kühmeier, soprano; Bernarda Fink, mezzo; Anthony Spiri, piano: Lieder by Brahms, Dvorak, Schumann

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
APR 17 18.00 Fifth anniversary concert: Brussels Latvian Choir conducted by Gita Pävila, with other Latvian choirs and the Brussels Latvian dance group
APR 21 20.30 Musique acousmatique, works by Bruno Capelle, Chantale Laplante, Adam Stansbie, more

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
www.demunt.be

APR 19 20.00 Genia Kühmeier, soprano; Bernarda Fink, mezzo; Anthony Spiri, piano: Lieder by Brahms, Dvorak, Schumann

Opera

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until APR 25 15.00/20.00 Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky, based on Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse. Conducted by Dmitri Jurowski, staged by Tatjana Gürbaca, with Tommi Hakala (Onegin) and Anna Leese (Tatjana) (in the original Russian with Dutch surtitles)

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30
www.mim.be
APR 17 15.00 Alexei Lubimov, fortepiano: Chopin, Beethoven, more
APR 18 11.00 Viviane Spanoghe, cello; André De Groote, piano: Louis Vierne, Annelies Van Parijs, Brahms

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be
APR 21 12.40 Belgian contestants in the Queen Elisabeth Piano Competition

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
APR 19 20.00 Plamena Mangova, piano: Schumann, Scriabin, Chopin, more

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.507.82.00
APR 20 20.00 Wolfgang Zerer, organ: Buxtehude, Reincken, Weckmann, more

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
APR 21 20.00 Daan Vandewalle and Geoffrey Madge, piano; Bert Cornelis, sitar; Pandit Vinode Pathak, tabla: Messiaen, traditional Indian ragas

Leuven

Sint-Geertruikerk
Halfmaartstraat; 016.23.84.27,
www.30cc.be
APR 21 20.00 La Petite Bande conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken: cantatas and Easter Oratorio by Bach



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until APR 25 15.00/20.00 Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky, based on Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse. Conducted by Dmitri Jurowski, staged by Tatjana Gürbaca, with Tommi Hakala (Onegin) and Anna Leese (Tatjana) (in the original Russian with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.27.28
www.desingel.be
APR 21-24 Bouge B 2010: international dance festival focusing on the power of the performer



Antwerp

CC Berchem
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be
APR 21 20.30 De Queeste in Op De Hoge Doorn (On Raftery's Hill) written by Marina Carr, directed by Christophe Aussem and Domien Van der Meiren (in Dutch)

DON'T MISS



International Photo Festival

Until 13 June

Across Knokke-Heist

This photography festival has been staged for a number of years, but this is just the second since a restructuring that has elevated it to an international and critical success. This year's title is Stars and Models, a focus on the posing and picturing of said subjects and the public's response. Contemporary London-based photographer Tim Walker is the guest artist (*photo*), and a beachside exhibition pavilion constructed especially for the festival will host the work of the late British photographer Cecil Beaton and the stylised work of Flemish photographer Nadine Tassee.

► www.fotofestival.be

Fakkelteater

Hoogstraat 12; 03.232.14.69

APR 15-JUNE 6 15.00/20.30 Ann Van den Broeck in The Musical Songbook, directed by Stany Crets (music theatre, in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00

APR 21 20.30 The Night of the Burning Apes, directed by Tone Brulin (in English with Dutch surtitles)

Brussels

Atelier 210
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
APR 20-21 20.30 Living Theatre in Mysteries and Smaller Pieces, directed by Gary Brackett (in English)

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25 www.demarkten.be

APR 14-15 15.30/20.30 Het Worm in Ritter Dene Voss (in Dutch)

La Maison Blanche

Sint-Jobsesteenweg 606;

www.theatreinbrussels.com

APR 15-17 20.00 American Theatre Company in Café Theatre, improvisational comedy (in English; dinner available)

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be



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Until MAY 2 Animism, Part 1, installations, photos and film exploring the collective practices of humans and non-humans and the ensuing relationships

Until SEP 19 Art kept me out of jail, performance installations by Jan Fabre 2001 – 2004 – 2008

Extra City
Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extraicity.org

Until MAY 2 Animism, Part Two (see above)

Fashion Museum (MoMu)
Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
www.momu.be

Until AUG 8 BLACK: Masters of Black in Fashion & Costume

FotoMuseum
Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00,
www.fotomuseum.be

Until MAY 16 Congo (belge), photographs of contemporary Democratic Republic of Congo by Flemish photographer Carl De Keyzer

Until MAY 16 Congo belge en images, historical photographs of the Belgian Congo, curated by Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer
Until MAY 16 Bamako Encounters 2009, works by young African photographers

Borgloon

Gasthuiskapel Borgloon
Graethempoort 3; 012.67.36.00
www.artborgloon.be

Until MAY 23 Natura/naturans, group show reflecting nature and renewed life, coupled with guided nature walks

Brussels

art)&(marges
Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20
www.artthisis.org

Until JUNE 27 Musik Oblik, music and visual art project exploring sound and vision (in collaboration with Recyclart; includes concerts and documentaries)

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80
www.stripmuseum.be
Until AUG 29 Moomin: Tove Jansson's Dreamworld, works by the Finnish illustrator and author

Bibliotheca Wittockiana
Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
www.wittockiana.org

Until APR 24 Pierre Mertens: Andere vormen van process, 45 years of literature by Mertens, a project by Bernard Maingain

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be

Until APR 18 Frida Kahlo y su mundo, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum (reservations required)
Until APR 25 Imágenes des Mexicano, portraiture and the history of Mexico
Until APR 25 El Horizonte del topo (The Mole's Horizon), video art

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by phone: +32 2 44 44 700
www.euromut.be/expats



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Until MAY 9 El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 paintings by El Greco

Cellars of Cureghem
Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24; 02.528.19.00
www.cureghemcellars.be
Until APR 18 Play Belgium, interactive and informational exhibition on the history, present and future of video games

De Elektriciteitscentrale
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be

Until MAY 16 Bamako 09: Borders, Eighth Biennal of African Photography, photographs and videos on the theme of border and frontiers (same show at FotoMuseum in Antwerp)

Design Flanders
Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60
www.designflanders.be

Until MAY 22 Ceramic Unica, ceramic art by The Fuping Eleven; photographs by Lydia De Bock

Espace Architecture La Cambre
Flageyplein 19; 02.642.24.50
Until MAY 9 Photographie et Architecture Biennale #3, photographs by 17 artists on the theme of celebration

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.new.mjbj-mjb.org

Until MAY 30 Charles Szymkowicz: Schilder in het bloed (Painter in Blood), paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Museum van Elsene
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.21,
www.museumvanelsene.be
Until APR 25 El Cubismo: Cubism in Context, paintings by European and Latin American artists from Madrid's Fundación Telefónica collective

Royal Museums of Art and History
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11,
www.kmkg-mrah.be

Until APR 25 Home & Away, a socio-art project reflecting housing, home and private life. Newly arrived immigrants and homeless refugees tell their stories by exhibiting their most precious items and objects

Royal Museums of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be

Until MAY 30 Marc Mendelson, paintings, drawings, photos, objects and documents by the British-Belgian artist
Until JUNE 27 Symbolism in Belgium, the evolution of Symbolism from its origins in the romantic painting of the end of the 19th century featuring Fernand Knopff, Félicien Rops and Jean Delville, among others

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org

Until APR 25 Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist

Until APR 25 Melvin Moti: From Dust to Dust, the contemporary Dutch artist's first solo show in Belgium

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
www.designmuseumgent.be

Until JUNE 6 Richard Huttens, furniture, interiors and objects by the Dutch designer

Until JUNE 6 The Scandinavian Touch in Belgian Furniture 1951-1966

Museum Dr Guislain
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be

Until MAY 2 From Memory: About Knowing and Forgetting, multi-disciplinary exhibition on memory and dementia in science and art

Museum of Modern Art (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
www.smak.be

Until MAY 16 Loek Grootjans: Leaving Traces, installations by the Dutch artist

Until MAY 16 Koen van den Broek: Curbs & Cracks, paintings by the Flemish artist

Until MAY 16 Collection FAKE?, interpretations of reality

Until JUNE 16 Ed Templeton : the Cemetery of Reason, photographs, paintings and sculpture by the American artist

Until JUNE 16 Electrified 02: Hacking Public Space, exhibition plus actions in public spaces across Ghent

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43
www.ccstrombeek.be

Until MAY 10 10.00-22.00 Feel Home, art and design project curated by Design September director Marie Pok

Kortrijk

Museum Kortrijk 1302
Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50
www.kortrijk1302.be

Until MAY 16 Miniaturen: Gras dat verder groeit (Thumbnails: Grass That Continues to Grow), group show with works based on poems and other texts by Flemish writer Jozef Deleu

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

Until JUNE 20 Pictografie: Schilderijen zijn ook tekeningen en vice-versa (Paintings are Drawings and Vice-versa), group show

Ostend

Ensor House
Vlaanderenstraat 27; 059.50.81.18 www.kunstmuseumanzaanze.be

APR 16-17 Claus in Ostend: A Tribute, celebration of Hugo Claus' time spent in Ostend, in combination with readings and walks (part of Ostend City of Culture 2010)

Kunstmuseum aan zee (Mu.zee)
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18,
www.pmmk.be

Until AUG 29 Bij Ensor op Bezoek (Visiting Ensor), the world of master Flemish artist James Ensor seen through the eyes of a variety of artists, writers and filmmakers on the occasion of his 150th birthday. Works by Ensor, Carl Cneut, Emil Nolde and many more

Turnhout

TRAM 41
Grote Markt 1; 014.44.33.98
www.tram41.be

Until APR 30 China en het kaartspel (China and the Card Game), Chinese printing techniques and card games

Until MAY 2 De eerste onder zijn gelijken (The First Among Equals), cards, letters, books and prints from mediaeval Latin schools in the Kempen region



Literaire Lente (Literary Spring)

Literature festival with libraries, shops, concert venues and cafes opening their doors for readings, interviews, parties, concerts and more

Until APR 30 across Flanders
www.boek.be/literairelente

Antwerp

Burgemeestersdebat (Mayors debate): Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens and Rotterdam mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb discuss their cities, two major international ports (free; in Dutch)

APR 20 20.00 at Bourla Theatre, Komedieplaats 18
03.224.88.44, www.toneelhuis.be

Brussels

A Writer's Europe: Romanian-born German writer Herta Müller, winner

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

CAFE SPOTLIGHT



Au Soleil

Kolenmarktstraat 86
Brussels

A former gentlemen's outfitters is an unlikely address for a grungy Brussels bar. The old shop façade has been preserved – take a close peek at the signs – but its previous use is a far cry from what you see today. Au Soleil, a name inherited from the shop, sits at the corner of Kolenmarktstraat and Lievrouwbroerstraat on the edge of the city's laid-back gay district. It was transformed into a bar about 20 years ago as the area went into decline.

While you might see some tailored types hanging out here, sneaking a beer on their lunch break, this is essentially a very casual bar. "We have a little bit of everything: tourists, working people; we are open to everyone," says manager Kino Herraz (stressing that he means convivial people). Occasionally you might hear a musician strumming away, especially if you head there on a Sunday afternoon. Herraz said you can expect all types of styles at the occasional concerts held in the bar, although not, he adds, "heavy metal". This is a bar that only does relaxed.

Inside, it's a typical brown café with wood-panelled walls and benches and a menu dominated by the national favourite: beer. Au Soleil serves up classics such as Chimay and Orval and local Brusseleer brews like Zinnebier. There's also a cocktail menu with unique house recipes. It's perfect for a rest between shopping trips; the on this old-fashioned cobbled street is just right for watching the world go by. Otherwise, head there for a night out, where it's the company and drinks that matter most. Just about no one can feel out of place. But the best time is to head there on a lazy weekend afternoon, as it's only when the sun moves around to the terrace, and you bask in the warmth, sipping a beer, that will you understand why this bar so perfectly fits its name.

Folk in Leuven: Street musicians, singers, dancers and surprise acts, followed by a concert by folk group Naragonia and after-party

APR 17 11.00-16.00 across the city

www.folkinleuven.be

Taste

Festival

for young

theatre

makers,

performers

and

choreographers,

with new

works

APR 19-22 at STUK, Naamsestraat 96

and across the city

016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be

Ostend

PSY.Mad Circus:

Contemporary circus

by Canada's Les 7 doigts de la main

APR 22&24 at Kursaal Ostend,

Monacleplein

SHARON LIGHT



Jordan Greenwood works the counter behind his grandmother Shirley's New York cheesecake

Crèmerie de Linkebeek

The oldest cheese shop in Brussels

Every morning at the Crèmerie de Linkebeek, they throw sawdust on the floor. It absorbs the moisture people track in from outdoors, and it simplifies the end-of-day cleaning while minimising detergent use. But even more important than that: it's always been done.

Owners Jordan Greenwood and Laurence Duhot are concerned with maintaining tradition, which, when you own the oldest cheese shop in Brussels, means you have 108 years' worth of history to handle.

The store has deep local roots. Occasional elderly clients come back and reminisce about having visited the store as a child with their grandparents. The current clientele are largely from the surrounding neighbourhood in the Flemish Triangle at the centre of Brussels.

The Crèmerie also gets occasional Flemish tourists, ever since a beloved series of commercials by Flanders' Agricultural Marketing Board (VLAM), "Belgische Kazen, Belgische Trots" ("Belgian Cheeses, Belgian Proud"), was filmed there several years ago.

I could go on, but let's not forget the cheese! Greenwood and Duhot quite simply sell the best cheeses they can find. They work primarily with Belgian, French and Dutch producers, often from smaller, self-sustaining farms.

On the local level, their selection includes the soft Brugse Blomme and the sharp, hard Oud Brugge; Pas de Bleu, a blue cheese from Ghent's Het Hinkelspel cheese makers; and Cabour, an artisanal semi-soft cheese from Veurne, near the French border.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

You'll also find Grevenbroecker, the Achel blue cheese made by Catharinadal in Limburg, which took home the prestigious International Caseus Award in Lyon for Best Original Cheese in 2009.

As a specialty shop, their prices are naturally higher than what you'll find in the major grocery stores, but the excellent selection and friendly service keep people coming back. At the Crèmerie, they are as happy with clients who buy two slices as two kilos. Although a tiny space, the Crèmerie packs in more on top of its 120 to 180 cheeses (selection varies by the season). They offer a choice of cured meats, a few wines and even fewer beers, all selected by the same criteria as the cheese: products that the owners enjoy.

Only one bread is available: baguettes made according to a patented French recipe. You get milk from a farm in Lier in refillable glass bottles, as well as raw milk butter, eggs and a variety of biscuits and cookies.

You'll even find New York cheesecake, made according to Greenwood's New York-based grandmother's recipe. Of course, I indulged. It is sinfully dense and creamy. I asked what it contains, but Greenwood warned that sharing this information would imperil both our lives at the hands of grandmother Shirley. That's a sign of a good cheesecake.

► Oude Graanmarkt 4, Brussels
🕒 Mon 9.00-15.00; Tues to Sat 9.00-18.00
★ With only the best cheese, cured meats and beer, not to mention the cheesecake, this is one-stop shopping for a perfect picnic

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

■ **Kunstfestival desarts: Brussels best performance art festival is back**

■ **Moon Invaders: reggae/ska/soul made in Brussels**

■ **Motherhood and the politics of the workplace**

■ **Creative Flanders special insert: science meets art**

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



bijgeloof →

I thought someone had got the date wrong. It was the last day of March when I read about the opening of the new departure hall at Brussels Airport. The title ran *Luchthaven Zaventem denkt aan bijgelovige passagiers* – Zaventem Airport thinks about superstitious passengers. (By the way, Brussels Airport is outside Brussels in Zaventem, and no one in Flanders calls it by this new name, but that's another story, perhaps for Anje Otte's "Fifth Column".)

Surely this airport story was a day early. It sounded like a so-easy-to-unmask April Fool's joke. But no, apparently in the coming weeks the new *incheckbalies* – check-in desks – will be opened for holidaymakers. Rows 1 to 12 are open now, and, in the words of the airport's *woordvoerder* – spokesman: "Eind juni wordt een muur verwijderd en installeren we rij 14" – At the end of June a wall will be removed, and we will install row 14".

For the same reason, row 13 is also missing in planes: "Rij 13 slaan we over wegens de bijgelovigheid eigen aan de luchtaartsector" – We will skip row 13 because of the superstition that is part of the aviation sector".

Old superstitions seem to be thriving. Take black cats. In some parts of the world they bring good luck, but for

most people they bring bad. A recent local headline seems to confirm this: *Zwarte katten steeds minder populair* – Black cats less and less popular. The article reports that *veel minder zwarte katten verlaten het asiel* – far fewer black cats leave the animal shelter. On the other hand, *rode katten verblijven maar kort* – ginger ("red") cats stay only a short time.

Of course colour is only fur deep, or maybe not even that, as this sooty ditty reminds us. *Zeg buurman is die kat van jou* – Say, neighbour, is that cat yours; *Die op de schoorsteen zit* – That's sitting on the chimney; *Welnee het is de mijne niet* – Oh no, it isn't mine; *De mijne die is wit* – Mine is white. Ask a friend for the tune.

Bijgeloof – superstition ("by-belief") differs from other *geloof* to the extent that you can pooh-pooh those who believe that the colour of a cat brings bad luck without someone biting your head off. We have moved on from killing cats for being satanic agents, though every three years in Ypres they have their *Kattenstoet* – Cat Parade, which involves throwing toy cats from a bell tower. (The last real one was hurled in 1930.)

The next *stoet* is in May 2012. You can go or *je kunt je kat sturen* – not turn up ("you can send your cat").

THE LAST WORD . . .

Hard line

"I wanted to call it off, but my wife insisted I should go. I was racking my brains about where I would get protection."

Writer Benno Barnard, who turned to the far-right Flemish nationalist party Vlaams Belang after a warning that his book reading would be disrupted by Muslim protesters

Riding high

"What a surprisingly blessed week that was. I have to hurry and celebrate this."

Swiss cyclist Fabian Cancellara, who defeated Flemish cyclist Tom Boonen to win both this year's Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix race

Little chef

"I only really shine in my mashed potato with meatballs in tomato sauce, and, to be honest, my sauce is sometimes lumpy."

Chloe, a 14-year-old budding chef attending cookery camp for kids at the hotel school Ter Duinen in Koksijde

Keep cool

"Keep your beard. And relax." Kathy Pauwels, royal correspondent, advising Prince Filip on his 50th birthday